

EVANS-NOVAK POLITICAL REPORT

WHAT'S HAPPENING . . . WHO'S AHEAD . . . IN POLITICS TODAY

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To: Our Subscribers

From: Evans-Novak

Chicago and Washington

PRE-DEMOCRATIC
CONVENTION ISSUE

Two weeks ago we reported from Miami Beach that the excellent prospects for the November Republican sweep (of which we have been apprising subscribers for some months) had to be reassessed in the new light of Richard Nixon's blunder in selecting Spiro Agnew as his Vice-Presidential running mate. We felt that if Hubert Humphrey could conciliate the left wing of the Democratic party in Chicago, he would then have an even chance against Nixon. Now, even before the Convention begins, all signs indicate that Humphrey has failed in his reconciliation effort and, indeed, has even failed to appreciate fully the critical dimensions of his dilemma.

Therefore, in what remains a close and unpredictable race, Nixon ranks as the favorite and Humphrey the underdog, subject not only to the still-burgeoning size and directions of the Wallace vote in the South and across the country, but also to external circumstances and events, such as the intentions and actions of North Vietnam and the Russian takeover of Czechoslovakia last night.

First political reactions to the Russian move were that 1) Nixon and other Republican anti-Communist hardliners would be helped; 2) Humphrey's chances for nomination, already overwhelming, were now more certain than ever; 3) the possibility of the Democrats adopting a dovish Vietnam plank, already slim, was now less likely than before.

The Nixon-Agnew ticket rules out any Republican attempt to attract the Black-poor-young-intellectual vote and, thereby, reshape both the Republican party and the two-party system, but a solid GOP victory - perhaps including capture of the House - is still a possibility.

For the Democrats, their fate may be worse than mere defeat, and the unhealthy atmosphere at the meetings of the Credentials Committee in Chicago and the Platform Committee in Washington signify that Democrats are aware of the potential for disaster, if seemingly incapable of taking steps to avert it. Unless Hubert Humphrey displays more ability and imagination during the week of the convention than in the fortnight preceding it, the Democrats will leave Chicago with a rupture of potentially fatal proportions.

CAMPAIGN '68: DEMOCRATS

Here is how the four announced candidates shape up on the eve of the convention:

HHH: Humphrey has far more than the 1,312 votes needed to nominate.

In Chicago, top HHH strategists are claiming 1400-1500 first ballot votes, at the same time acknowledging privately that although support for their man is broad, it is certainly not very deep. We have detected softness in the larger, industrial states.

Illinois: Mayor Richard Daley controls some 110 out of 118 votes and almost certainly will go for Humphrey. But Daley is very concerned by polls showing Nixon whumping Hubert and would go somewhere else, if there were some place to go.

Ohio: After twisting arms out of their sockets, HHH got only 60 (some of which are soft) out of 115. The rest, like Daley, are worried and hoping for a miracle.

Michigan: Humphrey, thanks to labor influence, much stronger here, with at least 80 out of 96. But unimpeachable sources in Michigan tell us that if RFK had lived, he would have had a majority in the state.

New York: Humphrey has about 90 out of 179, but these are really RFK delegates who are not really interested in HHH and stick with him only because of the lack of a viable alternative.

Pennsylvania: Humphrey will end up with lion's share of 130, but his support is tepid at best.

In summary, Humphrey will come to Chicago with support even less solid and enthusiastic than Richard Nixon's on arrival in Miami. Today the Humphrey men in Washington and Chicago are less worried about the Platform and Credentials fights (both of which will be bloody) than they are about 1) a Southern candidate emerging at the convention to line up Favorite Sons in some kind of holding and bargaining action (although we have detected no sign of this in Chicago); and 2) the remote possibility of the convention, dispairing of an HHH win over Nixon, turning spontaneously to Edward Kennedy. So far, none of the Kennedy insiders are talking this game and, in fact, discourage it. But we hear more and more Teddy-for-President talk from rank and file delegates. Still, this is a very, very long shot.

McCarthy: We see no way under the sun that Eugene McCarthy can be nominated, and this is Humphrey's greatest single strength. This is going to be a "regulars'" dominated and oriented convention, and the "regulars" can't stomach Gene. Over and over Democratic politicians have told us wistfully that McCarthy could win for them, but they still can't buy him and can't explain why. We feel that McCarthy's failure is based not entirely on his dis-organization (which in Chicago is total), but on several deeper factors.

1) He has failed to mold himself in the typical FDR-Truman-JFK model of an activist Presidency. In this respect, he resembles Goldwater, which accounts for some of the Republican interest in him.

2) He has failed to win over enough of the Kennedy followers. Some RFK men - Jesse Unruh (Calif.), Gov. Hughes (Iowa) and Sen. Bartlett (Alaska) - are expected to declare for him over the weekend - but they are too little and too late. For example, when McCarthy addressed the California state Democratic convention in Sacramento, he failed to mention Robert Kennedy's name once to the Kennedy delegation.

3) He has failed to convince organization Democrats that he is anything but a party splitter and a rebel, something RFK managed to avoid.

McGovern: We still can find no rationale for this candidacy, save as a shelter in which a few - a very few - Kennedy delegates can weather the storm. Although this scheme was encouraged by ex-RFK staffers, we feel that McGovern will attract less than 100 delegates and does not now figure even as a Vice-Presidential factor.

Maddox: This one's easy. The Governor didn't know how he could get around voting for Wallace in Chicago, so he became a candidate himself.

Conclusion: HHH is an almost sure shot for a first ballot nomination only because of the lack of an alternative. We now feel that if RFK had lived and HHH had conducted himself as he has in the past months, Kennedy would have had at least an even chance for the nomination.

The Democratic Dilemma: Hubert Humphrey's real problem is not getting the nomination but what it will be worth to him next week. We can now report that it doesn't figure to be worth much, and that is Humphrey's fault in no small part. One anti-HHH Democrat told us that Humphrey is stuck with the two most unpopular elements in American life - the Vietnam war and the Negroes. But it goes deeper than that. HHH has failed to see what his more liberal advisers - Sens. Mondale and Harris and, lately, Larry O'Brien - have been saying about the necessity of disconnecting himself from LBJ on the war in order to win over the left wing of the party. Instead he has followed the advice of hawkish aide Bill Connell (and others) and stuck with the President.

Basically, Humphrey has two chances - one of them nearly lost - to win over the dissidents - the Platform and the Vice-Presidency, since (with the exception of the Mississippi delegation) he has decided to stay loose, aloof and remote from the Credentials fights, the most serious of which is likely to be the contested Georgia delegation where the McCarthy strategy is to try to force Humphrey to endorse the Maddox "regulars."

1) The Platform's Vietnam Plank: HHH was clearly tempted to take Larry O'Brien's advice and let Kennedy-McCarthy forces write the Vietnam plank and then run on it, but LBJ came down hard, making it clear, directly and indirectly, that a dovish plank would be playing into the hands of the North Vietnamese in the Paris negotiations. The result was Humphrey at his worst - in a fortnight, going first left and then right on bombing, the talks, a coalition government (unfortunately equating his position with RFK's, as we predicted in this Report some time ago). As we go to press, a bitter floor fight on Vietnam - which was preventable - seems inevitable. HHH may win on the floor, but it will be a pyrrhic victory.

2) The Vice-Presidency: The probable failure to obtain an agreed-upon or compromise Vietnam plank limits Humphrey's vice-presidential options, making it extremely difficult for him to ask established doves - such as McCarthy or McGovern - to serve with him. Furthermore, failure on the Vietnam plank rules out a last-ditch appeal to Teddy Kennedy to go on the ticket for the sake of the party.

We feel that there is one small, remote, wild possibility for HHH - and it is a possibility delegates are whispering about. Throw the nomination open to the convention. We feel certain that one of two men - Kennedy or McCarthy - would be nominated. Either would help the ticket, of course (in fact, only Kennedy or McCarthy help Humphrey in the polls), and after open nomination in the convention it would be extremely difficult for either to decline (although Kennedy men tell us he would decline). It seems to us that this is the only way HHH can both strengthen his ticket and give the dissident elements in the party a chance to participate in both the convention and, more important, the election.

Needless to say, chances for such a maneuver hardly exist, no so much because it is impractical but because Humphrey still doesn't realize how desperate his straits really are, polls or no polls. He has told friends that Nixon's choice of Agnew makes it possible for him to choose a middle road. His Chicago staff currently favors Gov. Hughes (N.J.), particularly if he keeps the Credentials Committee moving; Sen. Harris (Okla.), who is acceptable to the South and, apparently, has not been damaged by his service on and identification with the Kerner Commission. Curiously

enough, the South does not expect a Southern candidate and does not seem to care very much either. Others in the running today are: Gov. Muskie (Maine), John Gardner (a Republican), Mayor Alioto (San Francisco), Sargent Shriver, and Larry O'Brien, who keeps saying he wants to get out of politics.

If the Convention winds up with a bland Vietnam plank and a bland vice-presidential nominee, we are sure that scores of delegates - including some big names - will leave, saying privately that a Nixon win is needed to reform the Democratic party. In fact, they are saying that privately - and a lot more - in Washington and Chicago right now. In that case, Hubert Humphrey's chances will rely almost entirely upon 1) getting a big Negro turnout, which seems chancy right now, and 2) hoping that Wallace cuts more deeply into the Republicans than the Democrats, and hoping that he cuts very deeply indeed.

CAMPAIGN '68: REPUBLICANS

We have been asked in the last two weeks if Nixon can win with his Southern perimeter strategy. Arithmetically it's possible. Here's how.

Give Humphrey all the Northeast (including N.Y., Pa., N.J., Conn., and Mass.), throw in Michigan and Ohio (because of the Negro vote), West Virginia, Missouri, Minnesota, and New Mexico. Give Wallace all the Goldwater states of the Deep South. Then if Nixon can carry Calif. and Illinois, which today are the most populous of the Big Six Industrial States, plus Texas and the other perimeter states of the South, the Plains and the Mountains, he is a winner, as follows:

Wallace - 47 electoral votes

Humphrey - 210 electoral votes

Nixon - 281 electoral votes (or 11 votes to spare over the needed 270)

We most definitely are not making a prediction, merely showing that a Republican can conceivably win without Pa., N.Y., N.J., Ohio or Mich. It's the hard way, but it's possible. It's the Goldwater Southern strategy (minus the Wallaceite Deep South) - four years late.

Furthermore, Nixon aides have told us that the Nixon high command now looks at the broad national picture in this way: Rounding off the figures, the polls tend to show Nixon, 40%; HHH, 40%; Wallace, 20%. Nixon cannot bite into the HHH vote - particularly with Agnew as his running mate - and must, therefore, go after the Wallace vote. This, it should be stressed, means not merely going after Southern Wallace voters but Wallace voters who may mean the balance in such states as Illinois, California and the Border states. That means law and order talk.

We feel that this is not a pre-ordained course set by Nixon, but something imposed upon him by the Agnew selection, which was one function of the Thurmond veto power. This course has pitfalls galore. All our intelligence is that Wallace is growing, not declining, and it remains to be seen if Nixon-Agnew can woo the alienated voters from him. Furthermore, Nixon is still talking a Big Seven States campaign strategy, but his real chance depends upon a sweep of his Southern perimeter strategy. A contradiction.

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